

Spring into Home Improvement!

As the weather gets warmer, many homeowners' thoughts turn to home improvement. If you are thinking about remodeling or making repairs to your home, remember these tips:

- Do not use an unlicensed contractor! Make sure that the contractor is currently licensed with Maryland Home Improvement Commission (MHIC) by calling (410) 230-6309. The MHIC's Guarantee Fund provides recourse to consumers for substandard or incomplete work but only if the work was performed by a licensed contractor.
- Beware of contractors who come to your home unsolicited. Most "traveling" home improvement contractors do not have valid home improvement licenses. Beware of any offer that sounds too good to be true and assume that any offer that is made on a "now or never" basis is fraudulent.
- Get more than one estimate before contracting for repairs or service. Ask for explanations for price differences between bids, and don't automatically choose the lowest bidder. If the contractor tells you that an expensive or major appliance should be replaced, ask for the contractor's price in writing. Consider purchasing replacement appliances yourself and shop around for the best price.
- Check the complaint history of the contractor with MHIC, and the Howard County Office of Consumer Protection at 410-313-6420. Also, ask for references of recently completed jobs and check them.

For more information read our factsheet "Hiring Home Improvement Contractors" posted along with information on other consumer topics at www.howardcountymd.gov/consumertips. To file a complaint, ask a question or to obtain this factsheet in an alternative format, please contact the Office of Consumer Protection at 410-313-6420 (voice/relay) or email us at consumer@howardcountymd.gov.